ABSTRACT: The allegory *Life of Pi*, loaded with metaphors of the Tiger, Hyena, Zebra, Orang-utan and the “lone human” Pi is intended to express the frequently narrated story of survival. The question of human survival in the face of adversity is axially related to the theory of ‘the hand of God’ or the theory of providence. However, another important motif runs parallel to the axis mentioned above, which can be aptly termed the ‘Crusoe Syndrome.’ It is basically the fear of wild nature: the fear of uncharted seas, unmapped territory and strange people. Pi shares most of these fears of Crusoe except perhaps the fear of strange people. While the two stories offer similar experiences of the castaway in different contexts and through different characters there are also many contrasts between the world views of the two protagonists. The paper will focus on the underlying theological theme in the texts of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Life of Pi* and also attempt to discover transformations in the two world views separated by more than two centuries of history. Teleological history was the history of theology. The paper will try to develop an ontological approach to understand difference and transformation without attaching any significance to telos.

KEYWORDS: disenchantment, metaphysics, Pi, Crusoe, Enlightenment, God syndrome, intertextual, postmodern, philosophy, rationality.

0. INTRODUCTION

Questions of human existence in most fictional narratives often get magnified into theological questions but are finally resolved with solemn proclamations about the existence of supernatural powers beyond the world of physical/material reality. This has been a common pattern of narrative found in biblical texts such as *The Book of Job* or the story of Jonah and also in other narratives such as Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* and Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. These narratives can well be categorized as sea adventures that theologize on the insecurities and uncertainties of individual human life as experienced in unfamiliar locales under difficult circumstances. In these stories, the sea becomes the dominant motif, or rather, the terrain on which the drama of life of a heroic male protagonist
is played out against an apparently objective but mysterious power that governs its functional laws. The hero, in almost every story referred to here, attempts to explain to himself the meaning of his struggle to survive, and in doing so narrates his understanding of God to the reader. While these stories came in the form of printed texts, though some perhaps transformed from earlier oral versions, the latest addition to the master narrative of the human-divine paradigm comes in the form of a simple yet extremely powerful story told in the film *The Life of Pi*, directed by the Taiwanese-American director, Ang Lee.

The story of Pi resembles the story of Robinson Crusoe in many respects. Both Pi and Crusoe are lone survivors of shipwrecks, both have a passionate desire to survive against all odds and both try to understand their miraculous survival in terms of a superior metaphysical reality. However, these comparisons may seem quite plain and defeat the specific narrative powers of the texts. In fact, a proper intertextual study will reveal more differences than similarities between these narratives. Crusoe’s adventures, though beginning on the sea develop more elaborately on the island which threatens to dissolve his British, capitalist, individualist, colonialist identity. The underlying theme of his survival rests on the moral, ethical and religious framework which Crusoe struggles to preserve with the help of the Bible he has miraculously retrieved from the wreckage of his ship when all fellow crewmen are lost except the captain’s dog. It is difficult to see any parallel between Crusoe’s relationship with the dog and Pi’s relationship with Richard Parker, the tiger, especially because the two narratives have different contextual frameworks of time and space. Any comparison between these texts becomes even more complicated because they belong to different epochs of history: *Robinson Crusoe* was first published in 1719 and Defoe is considered as a pioneer of the English novel; whereas *Life of Pi* first appeared in print in England in 2002. The historical time lag of almost three centuries suggests that the novel as a narrative form has evolved and matured along with its readers who today live in habitats of an unending present that are commonly referred to as postmodern.

The character of Pi, strangely named Piscine Molitor Patel after a swimming pool in Paris, is a good example that shows how a confusion
of time and space can be created in the reader’s mind. Ambiguities of time and place are one of the characteristics of postmodern narratives. Pi claims that his mamaji had travelled all round the globe and swum in every swimming pool in every town and city which gives one the idea of a common global metropolitan culture that defines postmodern leisure, luxury and life. The character of Crusoe, on the other hand, addressed a different set of readers at a different time and space; specifically, 18th century England. Crusoe’s audience might be the literate British middle class who probably absorbed everything he said about strange lands and people without the least bit of incredulity. Their knowledge of the world was much more limited than that of the readers of Yann Martel. The readers of the book Life of Pi and the audiences who watched the film released in November 2012 comprise of a large www.pi.com group of literate English-speaking people who understand the nuances of computer-generated images. They are also mostly the generation of the 1980s and 90s; children of liberalization and globalization who make sense of the geographical world by googling down on satellite images of places on earth. The sea and the sky however, remain unmapped though navigators – pilots and cabin crew of ships – constantly negotiate these spaces with the help of GPS (Global Positioning System). My argument therefore is that the pragmatics (the relation of signs to interpreters) of Crusoe’s narrative differs vastly from the narrative of Pi. The differential contexts thus render different semantic possibilities. As a result, a lot of ambiguity remains both within and between these texts. Nevertheless, the texts become interesting entirely due to such ambiguities.

This paper will try to investigate two main issues related to the novels Robinson Crusoe and Life of Pi and the film-text of Pi. First is the issue of defining the self in relation to the physical, natural world; the second is the search for a metaphysical truth.

1. DEFINING THE SELF

Let us begin with the issue of defining the self in Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe’s understanding of his relation to the space that surrounds him is
limited. Unenclosed land is as mysterious and frightening to him as the sea which he experiences almost unwillingly. His understanding of existence in the world comes from the basic knowledge of physical geography and geometric calculation which he learnt from books and also from translating his personal experience into a logic of faith. It is the same logic of the puritan spirit that makes the Bible and the believer the centre of the meaningful universe. Therefore, when confronted with space he cannot directly relate to, he feels the loss of his epistemic centre and that creates an unusual sense of fear of the unknown in him. Upon landing on the island as the lone survivor of the shipwreck Crusoe is both happy and sad about his situation, and tells the reader: “I walked about on the shore lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapped up in contemplation of my deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe, reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and that there should be one soul saved but myself…” (Defoe 1716: 43).

Crusoe’s initial reaction is however shortlived for very soon he realizes that he is on strange land and probably surrounded by wild beasts and savages. The fear of unknown territory combined with the fear of loneliness urges him later to ask existential questions about himself. Fear of unmapped land also forces him to take up refuge on top of a tree: “All the remedy that offered my thoughts at that time was, to get up into a thick bushy tree like a fir, but thorny, which grew near me, and where I resolved to sit all night, and consider the next day what death I should die; for as yet I saw no prospect of life” (Defoe 1716: 44).

Robert P. Marzec in his article titled ‘Enclosures, colonization, and the Robinson Crusoe syndrome’ suggests that Crusoe spends the first night on the island “fearful of unknown space…inhabiting the land not on its own terms but metaphysically above it in a tree” (Marzec 2002: 130). Uncharted land, therefore, “triggers a response of dread” from Crusoe when “uncontrollably thrown into the space of uncultivated land, he is unable to immediately establish a frame of reference” (130). It creates a crisis of identity; of a self lost in the vastness of space. The German sociologist Max Weber explains how humans derived meanings through their belief in God in his theory of the sociology of religion. Weber’s
own puritanical attitude made him believe that the mystery of the universe enchanted human beings in a way that led them towards an imaginative understanding of a God who gave meaning to their existence. However, with increasing rationalization of human thought and new scientific discoveries, a disenchantment of the world took place according to Weber. The German word, *Entzauberung* literally means removal of magic; something close to the loss of aura or deprivation of mystique. It refers to the devaluation of mysticism in modern Western societies that resulted from cultural rationalization.

Richard Jenkins proposes that “When Max Weber borrowed the expression ‘the disenchantment of the world’ from Schiller, he was offering a sociological – perhaps even an ethical or moral – provocation which continues to resonate today” (Jenkins 2000: 11). He also rightly points out that for Weber “the disenchantment of the world lay at the heart of modernity” (12). Modernity is associated with enlightenment philosophy and we can see Weber’s own disenchantment with the latter in a statement in his lecture on ‘Science as a vocation’ delivered in 1918. There he argues that “the increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives” (Weber 1919: 8). His anti-intellectualist stand becomes clear from such remarks.

Eyal Chowers while critiquing the sociology of Weber in the article ‘Max Weber: the fate of homo-hermeneut in a disenchanted world’ (1995) argues that meanings are more easily arrived at when humans with their insatiable thirst for them encounter an objective world that is enchanting. However, with the disenchantment of the world post-enlightenment, deciphering codes to find meanings has become rather difficult. According to Chowers, the confusion created especially by German thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche helped form “one of the paradoxes that defined the Western understanding of the self” (Chowers 1995: 123). While Nietzsche in his philosophy of nihilism “shattered the last hopes of religious and metaphysical consolation, thereby suggesting the possible meaninglessness of human existence,” (123) Weber struggled to establish a meaningful self in the intermediate space of rationality and irrationality.

The evaporation of meaning as suggested by Nietzsche created problems for hermeneutic theory in Western philosophy that had always revolved
round essential meanings. Chowers suggests that “the tension between these two positions” (123) is most manifest in the works of Max Weber. Chowers rightly points out that Weber accepted “the irreversible disenchantment of the world” (123) under Nietzsche’s influence. However, disenchantment posed problems for a particular kind of self, a self that desired meanings centred around a theological idea of existence. 19th century thinkers like Weber envisioned such a self to develop a sociology of religion. She argues that “the threats of disenchantment, of a rationalized social environment, and of meaninglessness dominate Weber’s work because he views human beings as creatures who desire meaning in their lives and are able to invent it” (123). This desire for essential meanings in a world disenchanted by scientific rationality continues to haunt both protagonists Crusoe and Pi.

These centred meanings are established by marking territorial boundaries and constructing enclosed spaces in the case of Crusoe while Pi tries to establish them through attempts to build a meaningful survival relationship with the royal Bengal tiger, Richard Parker. Crusoe reinvents his own familial faith by successfully converting Friday into Christianity whereas Pi tries to rediscover universal humanism which he believes is the essence of all religions by reflecting his idea of the human onto a carnivorous animal. The animal then is expected to behave like a human; rather more humane than humans by showing signs of gratitude. Crusoe’s understanding of himself comes more from an introspective, self-reflexive mind; however, Pi’s interpretation of human life seems to come from an outward looking self that seeks to locate meaning in its reflection in other life forms. His father’s zoo animals serve as the real laboratory of life on which Pi often reflects and meditates. These parallels and contrasts serve to explain how intertextual readings can help in mediating new meanings by various acts of subversion and inversion. For example, Crusoe’s desire to find ultimate meanings for his miraculous survival becomes richer when one tries to read his character from Friday’s point of view, his slave for whom, Crusoe believes he acted the saviour. The life of Pi however, becomes more meaningful when looked at from the point of view of the tiger. If Friday turns out to be the alter ego of Crusoe; Richard Parker becomes the alter ego of Pi.

Defoe’s text serves to develop postcolonial perspectives and Crusoe is regarded as the prototype of the early British colonizer who coded all
land in a particular way to facilitate enclosure and territorial expansion. The enclosure movement in England exemplifies the issue of coding land as agricultural, pastoral or township dwelling. It created the idea of land as colony and redefined economic relations between landlords and tenants. Land was hemmed in in the early years of enclosures, and later an expansion of boundaries led to colonization of land overseas. Enclosure of agricultural land was the first step in the process of colonization. It had advocates who vouched for it as a method through which land owners could maximize profits, and also critics who saw it as a move that would further impoverish the already impoverished farm labourer. The well known Marxist E.P. Thompson argues that “the spirit of agricultural improvement in the 18th century was impelled less by altruistic desires to banish ugly wastes or ... ‘to feed a growing population’ than by the desire for fatter rent rolls and larger profits” (Thompson 1966: 217). Thompson argues against enclosure propagandists stating that in almost every village in England “enclosure destroyed the scratch-as-scratch-can subsistence economy of the poor” (217). He argues that it was “a plain enough case of class robbery, played according to fair rules of property and law laid down by a Parliament of property-owners and lawyers” (218).

In the light of the above discussion, one can argue that enclosures brought a new dimension to the understanding of ownership of land while simultaneously creating a new propertied class. The enclosure movement not only brought in fences and survey lines; it also brought new laws to protect accessibility and transferability of property. Many historians, including E.P. Thompson, have pointed out an apparent connection between the enclosure movement within England and laws of private ownership of land introduced in the colonies. Such ownership of land gave the average English gentleman a sense of pride in his possession and also established a degree of faith in himself and his lord. Unenclosed spaces on the contrary; created a sense of dispossession. Crusoe encloses a small part of the island for himself not only to keep wild beasts and savages away; but also to get that ‘feeling of ownership’ he strongly desires. It is the capitalist desire for ownership of private property. Marzec points out that Crusoe rediscovers his selfhood only after he is able to “establish a relation to the land” (Marzec 2002: 131). However, it is
paradoxical that he does it “only from within the pale of enclosures” (131). To understand the other form of land that is neither cultivated nor in any order that suggests the presence of civilization, Crusoe “introduces an ideological apparatus to over code the earth” (131). This way Crusoe manages to overcome “the terror of inhabiting an Other space as Other” (131). Pi, on the other hand, begins to understand his miraculous survival by relating his near-death experience to that of the animals which land on the same life-boat. The boat ironically, is called a life-boat when it is surrounded all round by the mighty Pacific Ocean hardly assuring life to its occupants. Nevertheless, Pi’s efforts at unravelling the mystery of life that always fascinated him begin on this boat in the company of zoo animals: a hyena, a zebra with a broken leg, an orang-utan and a Royal Bengal tiger. For Pi, living in Pondicherry, a former French colony in India carrying a French-Indian name Piscine Molitor Patel is itself puzzling enough to make his experience of India postmodern. The diversity of religions, languages and cultures further add to this experience. Parched dry and terribly hungry on the life-boat; Pi dreams of typical south-Indian food:

I touched my belly. It was a hard and hollow cavity. Food would be nice now... masala dosai with a coconut chutney - hmmm...! Even better! Oothappam HMMMM! Oh! I brought my hands to my mouth - IDLI! The mere thought of the word provoked a shot of pain behind my jaws and a deluge of saliva in my mouth (Life of Pi 143).

Such dreams are only momentary reflections of Pi’s consciousness determined by his cultural conditioning in early childhood. However, he is soon overtaken by the harsh reality of managing life with a tiger in the middle of the Pacific. The light of reason gives way to disbelief as he begins to understand his circumstance: “I was alone and orphaned, in the middle of the Pacific, hanging on to an oar, an adult tiger in front of me, sharks beneath me, a storm raging about me. Had I considered my prospects in the light of reason, surely I would have given up and let go of the oar hoping that I might drown before being eaten” (Life of Pi 107).
2. SEARCH FOR A METAPHYSICAL TRUTH

The feeling of desperation and hopelessness drives both Crusoe and Pi to meditate on the idea of providence. In both cases, the inability of the rational self to explain and justify human survival in the face of adversity directs them towards a search for a metaphysical truth beyond material reality. Scientific rationality advocated so strongly by Pi’s father melts into thin air as he quietly and passively accepts the existence of God. This acceptance does not come with resistance but with a frequently asked question ‘why me?’ Pi says that he didn’t actually recall why he held on to the oar instead of letting go. He says: “I didn’t even notice daybreak. I held on to the oar, I just held on, God only knows why” (Life of Pi 107). This brings us to the second issue of the search for metaphysical truth of Crusoe and Pi.

Unlike Crusoe who has been well groomed in the Christian notion of faith and providence; Pi, from his early childhood days has always wallowed in the in-between space of faith and scepticism. The atmosphere at home created by an atheist-rationalist father who constantly summons him to think rationally and a faithful Hindu mother who enthrals him with stories of Vishnu and Krishna; serves as the backdrop for Pi’s philosophical ruminations. Religion for Pi is something that comes to him both as early childhood training in rituals and indoctrination through stories. Religious rituals and cult are also part of individual experience; they modify one’s perception and analysis. They are doctrinaire in essence since they impinge on the freedom of the subject’s consciousness to determine particular experiences. Pi’s first experience of ritual comes when an older sister of his mother in her zeal to celebrate the arrival of her new-born nephew urges his mother to take the child through a “Hindu rite of passage” (47). His mother carries him on “his first go-around” (47) in a temple on the insistence of her sister that “It will be his fist symbolic outing... It’s a samskara!” (47). Pi claims that he carries “no conscious memory” (47) of the whole experience though he admits that the sensory perception of “some smell of incense, some play of light and shadow, some flame, some burst of colour, something of the sultriness and mystery of the place” (47) must have made a definite impression.
Such first impressions about a mysterious unknown remain lasting for Pi who says in the novel “a germ of religious exaltation, no bigger than a mustard seed, was sown in me and left to germinate. It has never stopped growing since that day” (47). However, the search for a metaphysical truth does not stop with the symbols of religion for Pi; he tries to practise all three major faiths - Christianity, Islam and Hinduism - much to the chagrin of his father who fails to convince him with his rationality and to the befuddled amusement of the pandit, priest and the imam who assert that “he cannot be a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim” (69). They insist that “It’s impossible” and so “he must choose” (69). However, Pi’s practice of multiple faiths does not hinder him in his search for God beyond the pale of religious symbols and rituals. The search for ultimate meaning and truth is demonstrated through the struggle for survival of both Pi and the tiger. This equal struggle of a carnivorous animal and an avowedly vegetarian boy becomes the metaphor through which Yann Martel and not Pi tries to demonstrate a metaphysical reality – God. The narrative then, is an attempt to instil faith in a God who should be believed to exist, transcending all codes, languages, rituals and symbols. In a postmodern world of emails, twitter, face book and space technology where the idea of a universal god often gets subsumed under the more spectacular and stunning effects of human possibilities; the idea of such a peaceful, benevolent and unassuming God does seem appealing to readers and audiences.

The narrative succeeds not only in answering serious philosophical questions such as the relation between existence and essence as elaborated and problematized by Sartre but also the much simpler question of Blake in his poem *The Tiger*. Crusoe’s faith also returns to him under similar circumstances. His long and arduous stay on the island during which he suffers anxiety and loneliness; the idea of a benevolent god comes repeatedly to Crusoe’s mind. He frequently curses his fate and regrets the rebellious decisions made against his father’s good counsel but even then believes in providence. His faith, like that of Pi, gets reinforced further with every question he asks about the mystery of his survival. The joy of being singled out for life often overwhelms and stifles more serious questions about the hand of God:
…in a mere common flight of joy, or I may say, being alive, without the least reflection upon the distinguishing goodness of the hand which had preserved me, and had singled me out to be preserved, when all the rest were destroyed; or an inquiry why providence had been thus merciful to me…

(Defoe 1716: 85)

However, in order to make sense of his life in the midst of nature which signifies nothing more than its brute power, he feels that he has to find some metaphysical answers to questions of natural life and physical geography. Crusoe’s questions about origins are rhetorical in some sense because the positive answers that he seeks to justify his miraculous survival are already there in the scheme Defoe has prepared to reaffirm Christian faith in and through Crusoe. After suffering a bout of fever and feeling very weak Crusoe ruminates thus:

What is this earth and sea of which I have seen so much, whence is it produced; and what am I and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal, whence are we? Sure we are all made by some secret power, who formed the earth and sea, the air and sky; and who is that? Then it followed most naturally, it is God that has made all”

(Defoe 1716: 87)

As in Biblical stories of human suffering such as that of Job; scepticism finds its answers in some very powerful motifs of positive faith. Crusoe says that nothing came to his thoughts to contradict such conclusions about the divine will of God. On the contrary, he feels reassured with “the greater force, that it must needs be that God had appointed all this to befall me; that I was brought to this miserable circumstance by his direction” (88). His conscience checks him when he begins to ask “Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used?” (88). The reflective voice of his conscience chides him “as if I had blasphemed, and methought it spoke to me…dost thou ask what thou hast done?” (88). It is the same story of the complaining soul being consoled by an affirmative super human voice as in the story of Job. However, a modern literary equivalent of the theophany in Job’s story could be a return to polytheism or transcendentalism.
Motifs of faith have frequently dominated literary-critical discourse. The God question, when dealt with by poets, artists, and other ruminating idealist philosophers, has only moved in the direction of affirming faith and not the other way. It gives one the impression that such narratives have always assisted in many ways the metanarratives of religion that come in the form of epic stories with super human characters performing extraordinary acts of valour and mythic power. However, it is interesting to note that narratives like the *Life of Pi* are emerging in the new millennium to ask the same question about the mystery of creation. More interesting than that is the fact that the film version managed to create history and profits at the box office. If it doesn’t signify the emergence of a universal group of god-seekers; it certainly suggests something more compelling than that. It may well be a pointer that religion is trying to make a comeback through such narratives. However, in its new postmodern avatar, religion may turn polytheistic in its efforts to gather more numbers from the confused lot of agnostics who sit longer in front of their computers and less in front of their gods.

The 21st century saw the sudden upsurge of new computer-aided technologies; however with the weakening of the traditional meta narrative apparatus of religion; the anti-enlightenment posture first initiated by Immanuel Kant and later developed by Nietzsche seems to show itself in postmodern narratives like *Life of Pi*.\(^1\) Stephen Hicks rightly

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\(^1\) Many scholars generally think that Kant is the leading enlightenment thinker who inaugurated the age of rational philosophies in the West. However, Kant was talking about the limits of reason in his influential essay “The Critique of Reason.” Therefore, one can say that the anti-enlightenment posture was already present in the thought of philosophers like Kant who continued with residual metaphysical thought. Nietzsche picked this attitude from where Kant had left it almost a century earlier. While Kant affirmed his faith in the possibility of a moral order for humankind, Nietzsche and Hegel firmly opposed this idea. The latter agreed with each other “in their firm opposition to Kant’s doctrine of the primacy of moral values” (Kaufmann 1974: *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*). All three were concerned with the problematic relation between absolute spirit and the objective world. However, while Kant’s positivism affirmed absolute spirit with the zeal of anti-enlightenment thought, Nietzsche’s affirmation came through a negation of the possibility of reality. Hegel, on the other hand, distinguished between art, religion and morality by elevating the first two to the realm of the absolute spirit and relegating morality to the realm of objective spirit. For more details see Hicks’ *Explaining Postmodernism* (2004) and Kaufmann’s *Nietzsche* (1974).
points out that “Institutionalizing confidence in the power of reason” was “the most outstanding achievement of the enlightenment” (Hicks 2004: 24). However, this confidence was always “philosophically incomplete and vulnerable” (24). He argues that the “perceived vulnerability of enlightenment” became “one of the major rallying points for counter-enlightenment” (24). Hicks says that “some German intellectuals absorbed enlightenment themes, but most were deeply troubled by its implications for religion, morality and politics” (25).

Moreover, most enlightenment thinkers were deists who had abandoned the traditional theistic conception of God. “God was no longer a personal caring creator… the Deists God operated according to logic and mathematics-not will and whim” (25). The deist’s God was a “distant architect…not someone we pray to or look to comfort from or fear the wrath of… the deist’s God is a bloodless abstraction -not a being that is going to get people fired up in church on Sunday morning and give them a sense of meaning and moral guidance in their lives (25-26). Counter-enlightenment thinkers worried about the consequences of such thinking which spelt doom for faith. Postmodernism continues the anti-enlightenment attack on reason fearing the loss of something that Europe lost long ago in the battle for metaphysics. Hicks concludes that “Postmodernism emerged as a social force among intellectuals because in the humanities the Counter-Enlightenment defeated the Enlightenment” (27).

3. CONCLUSION

In a postmodern age, Pi raises the same questions that Crusoe raised in a different epoch. It shows a continuity of motifs in fictional narratives although historically there are epochal shifts in human knowledge and understanding. Both narratives call upon their readers to adopt the stand of a naturalist when it comes to understanding human predicament in the face of adversity. From the point of view of early 20th century literary critics, naturalism would mean an extension of realism. It has an added facet of determinism that puts human subjects at the mercy of biological and socio-economic forces. However, Richard Dawkins, an eminent
atheist of the 20th century, draws our attention to an interesting ambiguity in the meaning of the term “Naturalist.” He explains that in the 18th and 19th centuries the term naturalist meant “a student of the natural world” (Dawkins 2006: 13). In that sense, naturalists “have often been clergymen. Darwin himself was destined for the church as a young man, hoping that the leisurely life of a country parson would enable him to pursue his passion for beetles” (13). Naturalism as a mode of aesthetic representation tried to look at human life as a part of the natural world and also as an extension of it. However, from a scientific point of view, a naturalist is one who makes an objective study of the natural world.

Philosophers however, use the term in a different sense to mean “the opposite of supernaturalist” (13). A deeply humanistic atheist, therefore, cannot be termed a naturalist and returned to the fold of religion. Dawkins offers a clarification in this matter and suggests that all human thoughts and emotions “emerge from exceedingly complex interconnections of physical entities within the brain” (14). And an atheist in the sense of a philosophical naturalist “is somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world, no supernatural creative intelligence lurking behind the observable universe, no soul that outlasts the body and no miracles – except in the sense of natural phenomena that we don’t yet understand” (14). Therefore, from a philosophical perspective, Pi remains an agnostic who at times turns to reason, and at other times, turns to reflect curiously on the mystery of the universe. Crusoe, however, is the stereotype of the Biblical prodigal son who after a heroic struggle returns with a reaffirmation of faith. The struggle for existence can push one towards faith just as it can push him away from it.

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